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FUNDAMENTAL PROBLEMS OF ETHNOGRAPHIC
RESEARCH DURING THE SEVEN-YEAR PLAN

- USSR -

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FUNDAMENTAL PROBLEMS OF ETHNOGRAPHIC RESEARCH
DURING THE SEVEN-YEAR PLAN

[This is a translation of an unsigned article appearing in Sovetskaya Etnografiya (Soviet Ethnography), No. 3, Moscow, May-June 1959, p.p. 3-10.]

The extraordinary congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union was a great contemporary event which marked the entry of the USSR into a new, most important period of development-the period of the large-scale building of a communist society. The congress worked out a program of communist construction, gave it a scientific foundation and defined the main directions of economic, political and ideological activity for the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the Soviet government under present-day conditions.

In the report of N. S. Khrushchev, the speeches of the delegates and in the resolutions of the congress much attention was devoted to the further development of science in our country; new tasks were defined for scientists of various professions, including social scientists. "Our economists, philosophers and historians," says an editorial of the journal "Kommunist", "are called upon to investigate profoundly the laws of the transition of socialism to communism, to study the experience of economic and cultural construction and to generalize creatively and boldly work out the theory of new problems brought up by practice. Scientific workers must continuously investigate real life, analyze the processes which take place in it and, based on this,

compile fundamental works which will help the party in solving urgent problems, and enrich the theory and practice of scientific communism. At the same time it is necessary to analyze the processes which are taking place in the capitalist world, to unmask bourgeois ideology and to struggle for the purity of Marxism-Leninism, against revisionism."¹⁾

Guided by the historic resolutions of the 21st Congress of the CPSU all scientific institutions of the Academy of Sciences USSR, immediately after the work of the congress came to an end, set about working out plans for scientific research for the seven year period. Basic main problems set out in the plans were discussed in March of this year at general meetings of each of the departments of the Academy of Sciences and then at its general assembly.

The collective of the Institute of Ethnography of the Academy of Sciences USSR imeni N. N. Miklukho-Maklay planned in the current seven year period to develop research in three main directions: 1) research on the processes of change in the social-everyday life and cultural mores of the peoples of the USSR in the period of transition from socialism to communism; 2) the formation of nations and national problems; 3) the origin of man and human races and questions of the history of primitive society.

The central and leading place is taken up by a group of problems connected with the realization of the building of communism in the USSR. The basic content of these problems was revealed already in a number of other articles²⁾, thus it is not necessary to go into more *(see footnotes at end of report).

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The Seven-Year Plan adopted by the 21st Congress ^{of the} CPSU is not only a majestic program for the development of the economy of the USSR, but at the same time also a no less majestic program for the transformation of the daily life of peoples of the Soviet Union. Taking this into account the collective of the Institute of Ethnography sets itself the task of prolonging and deepening research on the present-day life of kolkhoz members and the working class of the peoples of the USSR so as not only to pinpoint the fundamental changes which are taking place in the life of the peoples but also to help in practice with their works to accelerate these changes. In the post-war years, the Institute of Ethnography systematically carried out research on the socialist transformation of the culture and daily life of the kolkhoz peasantry. Several monographs and a number of articles have been published and prepared for publication. However, at present there are still no works in existence which generalize the results of this transformation in the USSR as a whole, revealing the laws of the development of ethnographic phenomena in the period of socialism. The seven year plan of the Institute provides not only for a considerable broadening of research on this theme, which would include various aspects in natural geographical field and in conditions of economic life and the ethnical peculiarities of the population, but also the preparation of large, generalizing monographs.

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The first place among these is taken up by a collective monograph on the subject: "Present-day Life of Kolkhoz Members in the USSR

and Perspectives of its Further Transformation on the Road to Communism." In addition, about 15 works will be published, devoted to research on these processes among the several peoples (for example among the peoples of the Far North and the Russian population of Siberia) or in some rural localities (in kolkhozes or groups of kolkhozes, in rural rayons or among the rural population of entire oblasts).

The volume of research devoted to the daily life of the working class of the peoples of the USSR is being greatly expanded. Soviet ethnographers have only comparatively recently begun to study the daily life and culture of the workers. It was not so long ago that it became necessary to overcome survivals of the old ethnographic school, which had been formed when Russia (especially its outlying regions) was predominantly a peasant country and when the concept "peasantry" often in fact coincided with the concept "the people."

Under conditions of the victory of socialism and the unprecedented industrial development of the country, ethnographers no longer have the right, in describing the life of any people, to confine their investigations only to the kolkhoz peasantry. In the past five years research was carried out on the life of the workers of the USSR by ethnographers of Georgia, the Ukraine, by the Institute of Ethnography in the Urals, in Azerbaydzhan and in Turkmenia. It is planned to continue this work in the coming seven years and to start on new and more extensive ethnographic research. The Institute of Ethnography in particular is planning such research work on industrial workers of Sormov and Ivanov and workers in sovkhoses on the virgin lands of Western

Siberia and Kazakhstan. This research will culminate in the publication of several monographs, and a collection of articles on: "The life of the working class of the peoples of the USSR."

Similar works are planned by ethnographic institutions of Uzbekistan, Bashkiriya and several other republics; this should be welcomed in every way.

Serious attention is devoted by ethnographers to studying the family among peoples of the USSR and the processes of the transformation of family life. In addition to works already published or prepared for publication, starting in 1959 research will be carried on on these questions in the various rayons of the Soviet Union: in Estonia, Latvia, Karelia, the central oblasts of the RSFSR, in Osetia, Kirgiziya, and others. The material obtained with those gathered earlier, will make it possible to prepare a number of monographs, describing the peculiarities of the development of the family among the various peoples of the USSR. These materials will be used also in preparing a basic, generalizing work: "The Ways of the Development of the Soviet Family."

In the course of the seven year period much work will have to be done to overcome the still existing lag in the study of the spiritual culture of peoples and the processes of forming a materialistic view of the world and ways of eradicating religious survivals in the life of the peoples of the USSR. In the past five years, the workers of the Institute of Ethnography carried out hardly any special field studies on these very important problems, excepting works in Central Asia; in the other rayons of the USSR material was collected in a

casual manner. In 1959 a special resolution of the Presidium of the Academy of Sciences USSR set up in the Institute a group for the history of religion and atheism which has the task, among others, of organizing planned field studies on this subject and preparing and publishing materials and investigations. In 1960 it is planned to publish the first collection of articles: "Religious Survivals among the Peoples of the USSR and Ways for Overcoming Them," which will include works, describing the conditions on this question in Uzbekistan, Kirgiziya, Latvia, Lithuania, among the peoples of the Far North and among the Russian kolkhoz peasantry.

As the material is collected, similar collections will be published. By the end of the seven year period it is planned to prepare a collective monograph, generalizing material from all special research.

In the course of the grandiose transformations in the life of the peoples of the USSR which are determined by the building of communism, many new tasks will inevitably come up for ethnographers, which have not yet been adequately reflected in the seven year plan for scientific research. Thus, it is necessary to begin systematic observation of the course of processes characteristic for overcoming essential differences between the city and the country, processes, the successful development of which will confront ethnographers very soon with the very urgent question of the need for studying rural and city populations in equal measure.

Of no less grave importance in ethnographic research in the period of large-scale building of communism are problems of developing a

communist morality in the peoples of the USSR and of changing the psychic mould of the people. The building of communism by its very nature, determines the process of the formation of the spiritual life of society, the development of a new man. Ethnographers, by the methods of their work are directly connected more than other social scientists with the masses of the people and must reflect in their works all positive phenomena in this field, at the same time helping the party struggle with the harmful survivals in the consciousness of the people. An ethnographer can not disregard such a remarkable undertaking of the most progressive part of society as the brigades of communist labor, participants in which ^{mainly} young people take on obligations not only for increasing the productivity of labor, but also for improving their own cultural level, making their daily life more sanitary and strictly observing communist morality. At the same time who if not ethnographers, who are very well informed on the peculiarities of the daily life of the peoples of the Soviet Union, should participate in the publication of truly Marxist works, which would reveal the causes of the tenacity of harmful survivals in the consciousness of the people and point out ways of fighting them, thus helping the party substantially in the successful realization of the communist upbringing of the workers?

The program for the large-scale building of communism provides for the all-round economic and cultural development of all peoples of the Soviet Union, which will ensure the further prosperity of socialist nations and lead to a greater strengthening of the friend-

ship and international solidarity of the peoples of the USSR. The study of contemporary processes, which are taking place in connection with the continuing consolidation of socialist nations, research on ways of the national development of small nations and ethnographic groups and the study of national forms of socialist culture among various nations make up an important section of ethnographic science and are of profound theoretical and practical importance. The Institute of Ethnography of the Academy of Sciences USSR and the other ethnographic institutions of the country have accumulated a wealth of experience in recent years in the study of ethnic processes which characterize the development of socialist nations and have published a considerable number of valuable works. In the current seven year period it is planned to further expand research in this field. The collective of the Institute is beginning work on a number of basic general works. Of special importance among these are the monographs: "The Consolidation of the Socialist Nations of the USSR and the Ways of the Development of Small Nations and Ethnographic Groups.", "Problems of the Development of National Forms of the Material Culture of the Peoples of the USSR in the Period of Building Communism", and some others.

The second main direction which planned ethnographic research will take in the current seven year period, - the formation of nation and national problems - includes a broad group of problems characteristic for ethnic processes, which take place among all peoples of

the world. Problems of the national development of the peoples of the USSR from the point of view of this question will include research on the ethnic genesis and history of any given people.

A large part of the publications on the above-mentioned problem are collective fundamental works generalizing the results of the research of many years. Such are the historico-ethnographic atlases (of Siberia, Russia, Central Asia and Kazakhstan, the Caucasus and the Baltic *regions*), the volumes devoted to the peoples of the USSR of the series of general works "The Peoples of the World"; the serial editions of the materials and research of complex expeditions; ethnic maps of the peoples of the USSR, *etc.*

Of considerable scientific interest also is the individual research, carried out by well-known specialists on some peoples or related groups of peoples. Here are included such works as: "The Ethnic History of North-East Siberia," monographs on the peoples of the Far North, the peoples of Central Asia, the Northern Caucasus, *etc.*

In addition to ethnographic sources, the majority of works devoted to the given problems widely use archaeological and anthropological materials.

A great place in the seven year plan of ethnographic institutions of our country and, primarily, in the plan of the Institute of Ethnography of the Academy of Sciences USSR, is taken up by research on the ethnography of other countries. This can be divided into three groups. The first group is made up of research into the ethnic composition of the population of any given country. In connection with

the disintegration of the colonial system of imperialism, such research acquires great practical significance. New states are arising within the old colonial borders and these, as a rule, do not coincide with ethnic borders. For this reason the new states are formed as multinational states, in which the national question will be an important problem. As a result of research on ethnic composition, maps of the distribution of the peoples of Indonesia, Indochina, Africa, Asia Minor and others will be published, as well as a number of monographs: "The Ethnic Composition of Indochina," "The Ethnic Composition of Nigeria", etc.

The second group is made up of research on the problem of the formation of bourgeois nations in the countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America. The peculiarities of the historical development and, primarily, the long rule of the colonizers, held back the process of the ethnic development of these countries. In many of them the process of the formation of nations is taking place at this moment, in our days. It differs in many points from the formation of nations in Europe. Research on these specific aspects is of great theoretical interest and can become a useful contribution to the Marxist-Leninist teaching on nations. A number of particular investigations on this problem will culminate in a collective monograph: "The National Question in Colonial Countries and in Countries Liberated from the Colonial Yoke."

The third group is made up of research on the national question in the Eastern countries of the socialist camp. Works will be prepared

and published on various problems of the culture and life of the peoples of China, Korea, Vietnam and Mongolia.

In the past five years the Institute of Ethnography published in the series: "The Peoples of the World," several large, collective monographs: "The Peoples of Africa," "The Peoples of Asia Minor," "The Peoples of Australia and Oceania," "The Peoples of America" (in two volumes). In the coming years this series will be continued with the publication of volumes on Hindustan and East and South-East Asia.

The third main direction includes research in the field of the genesis of man, the origin, ancient distribution and geographic distribution of the races of mankind and the origin, development and decline of the primitive-communal system.

The problems of the origin of man, always of great importance for a [correct] world view, are often discussed in an anti-Marxist way in bourgeois literature. Criticism of these concepts must be based on profound work in various concrete material. Soviet anthropologists have done a great deal of valuable research in this field. Based on Engels' theory on the role of labor in the origin of man, Soviet scientists made an important contribution to work on the problem of the origin of man and shed light on many problems connected with the phylogeny of man and the main factors in his evolution.

One of the most important of these is the question of the genetic relations of fossil *Hominidae*. This subject takes up a considerable place in the plan for work in the coming years and will culminate

in a basic work "Fossil *Hominidae*" and Problems of the Origin of Man, prepared by the Institute of Ethnography together with the scientific-research institute of anthropology of Moscow State University.

Works on the anthropology of the present-day and ancient population make up a constituent part of research on problems of ethnogenesis. To make these works more profound, it is necessary to carry on research on general questions of the origin of the races of mankind, the history of their distribution and other problems in the field of the knowledge of races. One of the truly urgent tasks is criticism of various bourgeois concepts in this field, especially in view of the resurgence of racism which can be observed in capitalist countries. The lack of Soviet literature of a summary work on these questions determined the inclusion in the seven year plan of the Institute of Ethnography of a basic collective work: "Racial Types of the Earth." Preparation of this work is connected with carrying out much concrete research concerned with both theoretical problems of the knowledge of races, and with particular questions of ethnic anthropology in various fields of *sythumena* [sic].

An important place in the plan of the Institute is taken up by work on problems connected with the history of the primitive society—a field where ethnographic as well as archaeological materials play a decisive part. At present it is extremely necessary to compile a Marxist work on the basis of the enormous amount of accumulated material, which would supplement F. Engels' work: "The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State," which, at this time, is the

only general Marxist work in this field. Compilation of such a research work, which would reflect the latest achievements of science, is even more important in view of the fact that the enormous number of revisionist and openly anti-Marxist works which have been published abroad on this question, have been subjected to criticism by us only in the periodical literature. A critical analysis of various schools of bourgeois ethnography will also form part of the special collection: "Contemporary ^{Trends} ~~Issues~~ in Bourgeois Ethnography."

In addition to working out all above-mentioned problems, the Institute of Ethnography will continue to prepare for publication works on the history of ethnographic science. Among such works the publication is planned of a basic work by V. F. Miller: "The History of Siberia," and selected articles by M. M. Kovalevskiy and D. N. Anuchin: "Essays on the History of Russian Ethnography, Folklore Studies and Anthropology" (Vol. 2, the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century; Vol. 3-the Soviet period).

To improve the teaching of ethnographic disciplines in higher educational institutions and the training of the necessary cadres of ethnographers, the Institute is planning to publish a textbook of ethnography as well as a methodological handbook for organizing field research in ethnography.

Large-scale cooperation in working out any problem has become a characteristic of the scientific activity of ethnographic institutions of our country in the postwar years. This was expressed not

only in close coordination of research, but also in joint field studies and joint preparation of many collective works.

The draft seven year plan includes a series of investigations, proposed by the Institute of Ethnography to be worked out jointly with other scientific institutions of the Academy of Sciences USSR, its branches, the academies of science of the union republics and other scientific institutions (higher educational institutions, museums, etc.). The draft was studied in detail at a coordinating conference of representatives of these institutions in April 1959. The main theses of the draft were approved by the participants of the conference. They showed great interest for continuing the joint research which had been begun earlier and for expanding by all possible means scientific contacts with the Institute of Ethnography of the Academy of Sciences USSR, as the central ethnographic institution of our country.

In addition to unifying the efforts of ethnographers of various institutions for carrying on joint research on a number of problems, cooperation in the work of specialists in related fields is also of great importance. In a number of problems (for example, problems of the ethnic origin and ethnic history of peoples) ethnographers have over a number of years been carrying on research jointly with archaeologists, anthropologists and sometimes with linguists. In the current seven year period this positive experience must be utilized to a considerably greater degree.

It is especially important, in view of the main direction of

research in 1959-1965, to overcome the still existing separation between scientific collectives of related specialties, who are working on problems concerned with Soviet society-ethnographers, historians of Soviet society, philosophers, jurists or economists. It is also very important to reestablish scientific ties with collectives of folk-lore specialists.

Such creative collaboration will promote the most complete study of various aspects of the problems which are being worked out.

The extensive research work planned for the seven year period requires a decisive improvement in scientific-organizational forms. Some steps in this direction have already been undertaken. The decision adopted in connection with the recommendation of the general assembly of the Academy of Sciences USSR must be approved, which established scientific councils on the most important problems. The organization is planned of three unified scientific councils-one in each of the above-mentioned directions of ethnographic research- as well as several regional scientific councils. Scientific councils, which are composed of the best-known scientists, representing ethnographic science in the country and some related sciences, are the authoritative consultative organs which coordinate the entire scientific work on each of the above-mentioned problems,

Field research in ethnography is considerably expanded. The Institute of Ethnography and also many other institutions, have accumulated considerable experience in carrying out research expeditions and have improved the methodology of field work from year to

year. This refers in particular to research on the problems of ethnic origin and history. Archaeologists, anthropologists and linguists take part in the work of large complex expeditions, side by side with ethnographers. These expeditions-to Khorezm, the Baltic, Mordovia, the Pruto-Dniestr region, Tuvin-were greatly acclaimed. They will continue their work in the seven year period now beginning.

Field research on the processes of socialist transformations in the economy, daily life and culture of the peoples of the USSR especially in the rayons of the Far North and Central Asia have also been greatly developed, especially in the post-war years. However, substantial shortcomings existed in the organization of this work, the most important of which were the small size of the expeditions and inadequate material supply for them. At present the Institute of Ethnography is reorganizing the organizational forms of field research. The main attention will be devoted to research expeditions connected with the study of contemporary conditions. Based on the earlier small research units, two large complex expeditions will be set up, who will have the task of studying contemporary ethnic processes and the changes in the social life and cultural structure of the peoples of the USSR in the period of transition from socialism to communism. One of these two newly organized expeditions will carry on its research in the central and southern rayons of the RSFSR and in Siberia, the other in the rayons of the Far North. Ethnographic study of the socialist transformations in the life and culture of the peoples of the USSR will be further developed also in the work of all the other

above-mentioned expeditions.

Finally, it is necessary to point out yet another important problem, resulting from the tasks set for scientific workers of our country by the 21st Congress^{of the} CPSU--the problem of strengthening the tie of science with life, with the practice of the building of communism. This task must be understood as a call of our party not only to work out in the current seven year period the most urgent scientific problems, but also to accelerate realization of the results of research. In addition to publishing large, basic works, which require several years to prepare, the number of publications on ethnographic themes in the periodical and political press, especially in local republic and oblast publications, must be considerably increased. It is no less important to share the results of field studies and observations with local government organs and public organizations, which will give them practical help in their work.

The majestic program adopted by the 21st Congress^{of the} CPSU opens up before the scientists of our country, including ethnographers, unprecedented perspectives for the development of science and provides new, broad possibilities for Soviet people to apply all their knowledge, forces and abilities to the realization of the tasks of the building of communism.

- 1) Kommunist, 1959, No. 2, page 13.
- 2) See S. P. Tolstov: "Some Problems of Ethnography", Voprosi stroitel'stva Kommunizma SSSR (Materials of the Scientific Session of the Division of Social Sciences, Academy of Sciences USSR), Moscow, 1959, pages 218-228; "Theoretical Problem of the Building of Communism in the USSR, Sovetskaya Etnografiya", 1958, No. 5, pp. 8-16; "The Great Program for Building Communism in the USSR and the Tasks of Ethnographers", Sovetskaya Etnografiya, 1959, No. 2, pp. 3-9.